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ABSTRACT

Fifteen newspaper articles about popular culture in the United States are contained in this document. As the basis for a 15-week course by newspaper during the winter and spring of 1978, the articles served as the course "lectures." The articles were written by professors of mass communications, sociology, cinema, journalism, political science, and history; a newspaper columnist; a sports commentator; and a feminist author. They explore the nature of popular culture, popular culture as big business, and major themes that recur in such American institutions as the Hollywood "dream factory," music, sports, and politics. The role of popular culture in political and social change is also explored. Its influence on Americans' choices of life style and leisure pursuits is examined. Each article is preceded by a biographical statement about the author. (Author/AV)

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Popular Culture

Newspaper Articles for the Eighth Course by Newspaper

Authors

David Manning White
Herbert J. Gans
George Gerbner
Ray B. Browne
Robert Sklar
Nat Hentoff
Robert Lipsyte
Andrew Hacker
Nathan Irvin Huggins
Betty Friedan
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Alvin Toffler

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PREFACE

The fifteen articles in this booklet examine popular culture in America—the pervasive process by which we choose our contemporary life-styles and leisure pursuits. They discuss the nature of popular culture, popular culture as big business, and major themes of our popular culture that recur in such American institutions as the Hollywood "dream factory," music, sports, and politics. The role of popular culture in political and social change is also explored, and the final article makes some predictions about the probable future of American popular culture.

These articles were originally written for the eighth Course by Newspaper, POPULAR CULTURE: MIRROR OF AMERICAN LIFE, offered for the first time in winter/spring of 1978. David Manning White, Professor of Mass Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University, coordinated this course.

Courses by Newspaper, a national program originated and administered by University Extension, University of California, San Diego, develops materials for college-level courses. Hundreds of newspapers and participating colleges and universities throughout the country cooperate in presenting these courses to the general public.

A series of weekly newspaper articles, written by a prominent "faculty," constitutes the "lectures" for each course. A supplementary book of readings, a study guide, and audio cassettes are also available to interested readers, with a source book available for community discussion leaders and instructors. Colleges within the circulation area of participating papers offer the opportunity to meet with local professors and earn college credit.

In those areas where a newspaper is interested in running the series and no local college or university wishes to participate, credit arrangements can be made with the Division of Independent Study, University of California, Berkeley.

The first Course by Newspaper, AMERICA AND THE FUTURE OF MAN, was offered in the fall of 1973. Subsequent courses have included IN SEARCH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM, two segments of THE AMERICAN ISSUES FORUM, OCEANS: OUR CONTINUING FRONTIER, MORAL CHOICES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, and CRIME AND JUSTICE IN AMERICA.

To date, 1,000 newspapers and more than 550 colleges and universities have presented the courses. Approximately 15 million people read the articles for each course, and almost 30,000 persons have earned credit through Courses by Newspaper.

Courses by Newspaper has been funded since its inception by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency created in 1965 to support education, research, and public activity in the humanities. Supplemental funding for individual courses has been provided by the Exxon Education Foundation and the Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, National Institute of Mental Health. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

We also wish to thank United Press International, which cooperated in distributing the articles to participating newspapers across the country.

The views presented in these articles, however, are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of California or the funding and distributing agencies.

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Popular Culture: What Manner of Mirror?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAVID MANNING WHITE is Professor of Mass Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University, having previously been a Professor of Journalism at Boston University from 1949 to 1975. He served as general editor of the New York Times' Arno Press series on Popular Culture in America, 1800-1925, and was co-editor, with Bernard Rosenberg, of *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, which was influential in creating interest in popular culture research among academicians. Other books include *The Celluloid Weapon: Social Comment on Film, Journalism in the Mass Media*, and *Pop Cult in America*.

UPI Photos

A MASS-MEDIATED SOCIETY. Customers and employees in the television section of a New York department store watch the Special Senate Committee hearings on Watergate, May 17, 1973.

I: POPULAR CULTURE: WHAT MANNER OF MIRROR?

David Manning White

Walt Whitman intuitively understood what *popular culture* was all about many decades before sociologists began to use this all-encompassing term.

As Whitman put it, "I hear America singing, its varied carols I hear." All around us we hear, see, touch, wear, and taste the varied carols of our own indigenous popular culture.

It's Arthur Fiedler, smiling as the sales of his albums with the Boston Pops passed the 50 million mark, while quoting the composer Rossini that "all music is good except the boring kind."

It's Dagwood and Blondie Bumstead, L'il Abner and Mammy Yokum, and good ol' Charlie Brown and Snoopy.

It's 750,000 of us who waited in line three to four hours to see the art treasures of King Tut's tomb at Washington's National Gallery.

It's the *Reader's Digest* for the 40 million readers who thrive on its apple-pie wholesomeness; it's also *Hustler* and *Penthouse* for the millions of voyeurs who thrive on a peek over the transom of the primal scene.

It's Muhammad Ali proclaiming, "This is Joe Namath's country, but *my* world."

It's McDonald's where they do it all for you and gross about $3 billion a year. Viva Big Mac!

It's six out of every ten Americans watching "Roots" for eight consecutive nights, eclipsing the television audience that previously made the movie *Gone with*

the Wind the leader in spectator events.

It's John Wayne's face waiting for a sculptor to find another Mount Rushmore to immortalize him for succeeding generations of Americans.

It's the Texaco Oil Company sponsoring the broadcasts of operas from the Met for thirty-eight consecutive years during which Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, and Mozart were heard by more than a billion listeners.

A Composite Picture

Every society, of course, from earliest civilizations on, has been typified by its arts, the way its people dressed, the foods they prepared, its music, its religions—a composite picture that can be defined as that society's *culture*.

And what of American society today? It is characterized by a popular culture so pervasive that Americans spend at least one-third of the total hours of their lives as willing participants in it.

Our popular culture, which started in the nineteenth century, came to a peak during the twentieth century with the rapid decline of the work week. Whereas our great grandfathers put in a 72-hour week in 1900, by the 1970s we, their progeny, worked about half that amount.

Some Americans, a relatively small number, have chosen to fill their leisure with the "high culture" in arts and literary fare that has traditionally attracted the wealthiest or best-educated elements of society.

But most Americans pursue their leisure in terms of mass entertainment. And it is mass entertainment—entertainment produced for a mass audience—that is a major factor in distinguishing modern popular culture from other, earlier forms of folk culture.

Mass entertainment itself was made possible by the technological innovations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Newspapers achieved a key role soon after the 1830s, when improvements in the printing process and increased literacy made the flamboyant "penny press" so pervasive. Motion pictures followed at the turn of this century, radio shortly thereafter, and finally, that most pervasive of all popular culture institutions, television.

The Mass Media

Today we, as a nation, spend more than *600 billion hours* each year just with the mass media of television, radio, newspapers and magazines, motion pictures, and phonograph records and tapes. These media are the instruments through which most of popular culture is disseminated.

During those sixty hours every week of the year when we are at "leisure," the mass media are competing ferociously for our eyes and ears, to inform, persuade, but mainly to entertain us.

Because of the universality of popular culture, most of us feel that we know the media-made celebrities much better than our next door neighbors. When an Elvis Presley or a Bing Crosby dies, there is sadness felt by 100 million people, each of whom had his or her version of Elvis or Bing reinforced hundreds or thousands of times by movies, records, radio, and television.

Advertisers spend more than $35 billion a year in these media, bombarding each of us with 1,500 messages a day to tell us what to eat and wear, and how to get rid of the nagging headaches that the "outside" world gives us.

It is a huge complex of industries that provides our popular culture, and if it is a costly business, we apparently are willing to pay the price. It is a very profitable enterprise for the media moguls who can best grasp what the public wants.

Our Lives Reflected

Imagine a mirror so vast and extensive that it reflects what most of us Americans are reading, listening to, or looking at when we are not totally involved in our daily jobs or sleeping. Ten times as many of us could identify Archie Bunker as Chief Justice Burger or Secretary of State Vance, and who couldn't describe Dick Tracy or Tarzan? Each day we Americans are molding the elements of popular culture into our lives.

Popular culture, then, is the continuous process that mirrors the manner in which most Americans spend perhaps the greatest segment of their lives. A mirror, by its very nature, usually gives a realistic picture of what appears before it, but there are some mirrors that distort and some that focus on our grotesqueness.

If the image of ourselves is less than the idealized picture we might wish to see, we should not blame the mirror. Our collective dreams, anxieties, and indeed our sheer existence have fashioned the mirror. Perhaps the mirror only reflects the masks and the myths we want to believe about ourselves. We are the mirror; the mirror is us.

Since we are investing a total of about twenty-five years of our lives in our "leisure" hours, we cannot afford to be complacent about the quality of our popular culture. Therefore, a continual, constructive feedback between the culture-consumers, as Alvin Toffler has termed us, and the popular culture dispensers, whether they be in New York, Hollywood, or Washington, D.C. is imperative.

Whether the media barons need us more than we need them begs the question. They provide the mass culture that fills our leisure hours; but we make it lucrative for them. Our common goal should be a national popular culture that is enlightening and enlivening as well as entertaining.

Unlike Shakespeare's Mark Antony, our intention in this series is neither to bury nor to praise popular culture, but rather to examine the ways it reflects some very important aspects of contemporary American life.

In the next fourteen weeks a group of distinguished scholars and writers will discuss various facets of today's popular culture, examining its roots in the American past, its power as a gigantic industry, its role in interpreting (and sometimes affecting) social change in our national life, and even its probable future.

It is our hope that this series, utilizing the oldest of the mass media, the American press, will help many Americans understand the implications of living in a "mass-mediated" society, and thereby enable them to define more clearly the kind of popular culture most meaningful to their lives.

Story-Tellers and Story-Sellers: The Makers of Popular Culture

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HERBERT J. GANS is the Ford Foundation Urban Chair Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and Senior Research Associate at the Center for Policy Research. He has also taught at the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A specialist in urban studies and planning and in the mass media and popular culture, he is the author of more than one hundred articles and of eight books, including *The Urban Villagers, The Levittowners, The Uses of Television and Their Educational Implications,* and *Popular Culture and High Culture.*

CBS News Photo

WALTER CRONKITE EDITS THE EVENING NEWS. A few key executives in the TV, movie, and publishing industries act as "gatekeepers" of popular culture, determining what will leave their "gates" and reach the public.

II: STORY-TELLERS AND STORY-SELLERS: THE MAKERS OF POPULAR CULTURE

Herbert J. Gans

Every society has its *story-tellers*, who look at life through imagination-colored glasses, to entertain, inform, question, and reassure their audience.

In the past they created folk tales, folk art, and folk music. Today, they write movie or television scripts and novels, create commercial art, and compose popular ballads and "rock," and their product is called popular culture.

Together with the *story-sellers*, the businessmen and women for whom they work, they are the makers of popular culture.

Although names such as Paddy Chayevsky, Harold Robbins, and Norman Lear are well known, most story-tellers are largely anonymous. We know "the Fonz" but not the writers who created the character and put words in his mouth. Most story-tellers are white middle-aged males, although some women are now breaking down the sex barriers. Most story-tellers are also well educated, and some do not personally care for the popular culture they create, but they are also professionals who aim to please the audience.

Then, too, popular culture is a group effort; an individual writer's work is frequently rewritten by others, including story-sellers, who make it conform to what they think the audience will buy. In doing this they are acting as so-called gatekeepers. The television, movie, and publishing executives decide what enters and leaves the "gates" of their firms, along with the bankers and advertisers who provide some of the funds for marketing popular culture.

The most intriguing puzzle about the popular culture makers is what they do for and to the audience—how popular culture affects society. Scholars have not yet solved this puzzle; instead they have put forth two types of theories. One theory sees the popular culture makers as *passive* agents who give the audience what it wants.

The other theory views them as *active* shapers of the tastes of their audience.

Passive Theory

The "passive" theory holds that popular culture makers only spell out what is already in people's minds, so that popular culture is actually a mirror that reflects American society and its people. Not only their wants, but also their secret fears and wishes—for example, to be heroic, or bionic supermen and women. But an audience in the tens of millions is so varied in age, income, and education, and thus in its wants and wishes, that popular culture cannot possibly be a mirror for everyone.

Nor does it even try. Being a commercial product, popular culture is aimed at specific audiences. Many television programs are made for 18 to 49-year-old middle-class viewers, especially women, whom sponsors most want to reach; movies are generally intended for the 13 to 29 age group, since movie attendance drops off sharply in middle age.

But even more to the point, the audience may not even have strong wants or fears for which it needs a mirror. People use popular culture mainly for entertainment and diversion, and most do not take it very seriously. Moviegoers flocked to *Jaws*, I believe, for the chase scenes and the suspense, not because they needed to deal with their fears about Nature Rampant.

Nor do people care that much about the popular culture they get. In fact, Paul Klein, an NBC television executive, believes that viewers usually choose the programs "which can be endured with the least amount of pain and suffering."

Active Theory

One version of the "active" theory maintains that the popular culture makers are also America's tastemakers; that in creating popular culture, they also create our tastes and values. No doubt they help to shape some tastes, for the miniskirt became popular after actresses wore it in films and television programs.

But values must exist independently before they can appear in the mass media. For example, many Americans believed in the devil before Hollywood made *The Exorcist*, and they became more liberal in their sexual attitudes before the mass media were allowed to be franker.

The popular culture makers may propose new tastes or ideas, but the audience disposes; only a tiny fraction of the hundreds of popular songs recorded every year find favor with listeners; and these days, most new television programs are cancelled before the season is over.

Therefore, popular culture makers do not try to create or alter tastes; instead, they appeal to already existing tastes. More often than not, they only add novel touches to old formulas, standard story plots, and familiar heroes and villains, some of which have been popular since the days of folk culture.

Indeed, story-tellers and -sellers proceed by guesswork, for while they know what the audience has liked previously, they cannot predict what it will like next. They are better described as nervous guessers about, rather than powerful manipulators of, the audience's taste. And well they might be nervous, for they may soon be out of work if they guess incorrectly.

The Twelve-Year-Old Mentality

Another "active" theory argues that the popular culture makers, being in business, will do anything to make a profit. They therefore appeal to the audience's basest motives—or what is called "the 12-year-old mentality" in television. The result is a popular culture that is shallow or emotionally harmful to people.

"Charlie's Angels" and even "Upstairs, Downstairs" may appear superficial to the exceedingly well-educated partisans of high culture, those cultural experts who believe that almost everything save Shakespeare, Bach, and Rembrandt is trash. Popular culture is not made for experts, however, and people who use it for diversion do not necessarily find it shallow.

The charge that popular culture harms people has been made for many years, but so far, researchers have only demonstrated that seeing movie or television violence makes boys—although not girls—act more aggressively for a short time afterwards. No one has yet been able to identify lasting harmful effects of popular culture.

Heavy doses of "Starsky and Hutch" and other television and movie violence may not be desirable, but there is no evidence that they cause today's high crime rates. To be sure, from time to time, individuals carry out violent acts that they have copied from the screen, but they are few and far between.

In any case, television or films did not create their urge to commit violence. Rates of violence in America were much higher during the nineteenth century, before television and movies had been invented, than they are now.

The Diversion Theory

Still another "active" theory proposes that popular culture, by being diverting, also diverts us from recognizing America's economic and political problems—and from doing something about them. Admittedly, most popular culture (other than the news) seldom addresses the country's problems, mainly because the country is too divided to deal with them. The popular culture makers know that whatever they say about controversial economic and political topics will upset some people in their highly diverse audience and scare off advertisers.

My own theory is that the popular culture makers divert us because we want to be diverted, from our own as well as the country's problems, and they respond to the wants—and tastes—that allow them to stay in business. In the process they may influence some tastes as well, and, occasionally, they guess so accurately what is on many minds that popular culture does reflect widespread wishes or fears.

Most of the time, however, popular culture only supplies the laughs, thrills, and drama that help make life a little more pleasant. We have become so used to it that we can no longer do without it, but it does not often move us strongly or touch our deepest feelings. Which is just as well, for a popular culture with that kind of power could also divert us from our families, friends, jobs, and other responsibilities.

Popular Culture: Who Pays?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GEORGE GERBNER is Professor and Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, where he joined the faculty in 1964 after teaching at the University of Illinois. The recipient of several federal grants to study such subjects as film heroes and violence on TV, he is editor of the *Journal of Communication*. He is the author of numerous journal articles in the field of communications and coauthor of *Communications Technology and Social Policy*.

Martin Trailer Photographic, with the cooperation of Sears.

"AS ADVERTISED ON TV." Sears paint, the subject of an intensive national TV advertising campaign, is featured in a floor display. Advertising is today the chief support of popular culture.

III: POPULAR CULTURE: WHO PAYS?

George Gerbner

Popular culture is the stories we share every day. Call it news, fiction, education, mythology, or just media, that great and uniquely human process governs much of what we do.

Who is the most prolific and tireless story-teller in your home? It used to be the parent, grandparent, or older sibling. Today in most homes it is television—by far. Television has achieved what all emperors and popes could only dream about: a pulpit in every living room, with a charismatic messenger providing the common ritual of entertainment and information with a central underlying sales message for all.

The story behind this great transformation of society is the story of how we allocate and use our popular cultural resources. Who pays for what to whom?

For most of human existence, public story telling was a handicraft process, conducted face-to-face and administered by a priestly or noble hierarchy. Payment for it was extracted in the form of tribute or tithe and justified in terms of cosmic order. Tradition, memorization, incantation, and authoritative interpretation of scriptures ruled the day.

Cultural Mass Production

The industrial and electronic revolutions changed all that. One of the first machines—the printing press—began mechanized story telling and cultural mass production. The Bible could now be put into the hands of ordinary people to interpret as they saw fit, paving the way to the Reformation and the secular state.

"Packaged knowledge" could now cross boundaries of status, space, and time and break the bonds of family and caste. The old hierarchy gave way to the new corporate owners and governors of industrial society. Their power rests largely in their freedom to manage the industrialized process of story telling and to build mass

markets for mass production through the mass distribution of symbols and advertising messages.

Eventually advertisers replaced nobility, church, and state as the patrons of the most popular of the arts, particularly radio and television. The public's monies (included in the price of advertised goods) are channeled through them to support corporate aims, sales, and powers.

The electronic wave that gathered strength with radio hit hard with television, engulfing and changing the contours of all aspects of popular culture. The chief characteristics of television are cradle-to-grave and nearly universal coverage; centralized, standardized, and ritualized production; and nonselective use. In addition, most elements of program production are centralized so that news, fiction, drama, documentary, talk, game, and other shows serve the same basic institutional purposes.

The First Amendment to the Constitution, designed to protect the public from an oppressive state government, became the principal shield of the new "private governments"—the three major broadcasting networks and their corporate sponsors—protecting them from public (as well as government) control of programming.

Television has become the functional equivalent of preindustrial religion, preaching its corporate message in every home. The modern nexus of power is not Church and State, but Television and State.

Paying for Our Programs

How do we pay for this?

Advertising costs, which are passed on to the American consumer, total $36 billion annually—one hundred times the total gross budget of the United Nations.

Some 1,762 daily and over 7,500 weekly newspapers absorb nearly one-third of that amount. Television uses 20 percent of the total, and its share keeps rising, gradually squeezing older media out of the business. Radio now gets less than 7 percent of the total advertising support and magazines less than 6, with outdoor, direct mail, and other outlets accounting for the rest.

TV programming is run by a few largely anonymous network executives who regularly assemble over 100 million Americans a day and extract from their pockets over $30 million a day to pay for the advertising that supports the programs, the agencies, the broadcasters, the television set manufacturers, the repair people, and the electricity needed to run the set.

The power of television enables it to charge an average of $100,000 per prime time commercial minute and up to a quarter of a million dollars for a one-minute commercial inserted into a movie like *Gone with the Wind*—and advertisers stand in line for the privilege. Divided by audience size, these astronomical prices add up to an attractive "cost per thousand" (viewers) compared to other more selective—and selectively used—forms of mass communication and advertising.

Television also leads popular culture in terms of its concentration. It takes a big network to produce expensive shows and to take big risks. The top twenty-five network advertisers pay over half of the three major networks' bills, with three giant soap companies alone paying some 14 percent of the total.

The rest of the money we spend for popular culture goes for books, movies, records, and sports, all of which now depend on broadcasting for transmission or promotion or both, but most of which—unlike broadcasting itself—can also be bought directly by the consumer.

Public Monies, "Private" Media

Advertising-supported media create the bulk of popular culture. But their principal products—the products they sell for profit—are not culture; they are people, called audiences and sold to advertisers for a price.

The direct price the public pays for newspapers and magazines covers the cost of delivery. The advertisers pay the rest, but from money that, if not for special legislation, would have gone to the public treasury.

In other words, the public's own money is used to sell public audiences to the highest bidders. This is done in three principal ways.

1. All broadcasting stations are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to operate the airways in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity" according to the law. In fact, they operate as businesses to make a profit, but the enormously profitable license to broadcast in the public domain is given away free of charge.

2. The advertising subsidy that supports and guides the cultural industry is extracted through a levy on the price of all advertised goods and services. Some call this private taxation without representation. The tax is hidden in the price of soap; I pay when I wash, not when I watch TV or read a magazine.

3. Congress made advertising a tax-deductible business expense, subsidizes the postal rates of printed media, and provides certain advantages for "failing" newspapers.

Without these direct contributions from the public treasury, "private" media would not be profitable, and probably could not exist at all.

Cultural Service

Stripped of mystification, the "new religion" and other forms of mainstream popular culture operate on legislative and market mechanisms that channel public monies to private corporations to support "cheap" or "free" media as the cultural arms of business and industry. Since the marketing mechanism is concerned not just with popularity but with persuading large audiences to buy the goods and services advertised, the quality and diversity of the cultural service, and its relevance to the needs of many specific publics that make up the total community, cannot, therefore, be the chief criteria of most mass cultural production.

What of the future?

There are signs of tension and of pressure to loosen the hold of the corporate giants and the networks and to diversify the mainstream of popular culture, especially television. Citizen groups and public organizations are demanding greater responsiveness and protection of the public interest from all government—private as well as public.

Such broadening and democratization of popular cultural production would have the additional advantage of not selling the same fears, hopes, and styles of life to practically all of the people practically all of the time.

America's Popular Culture: Growth and Expansion

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RAY B. BROWNE is Director of the Center for Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. The founder and editor of the *Journal of Popular Culture*, he is the author or editor of more than twenty books, including *Icons of Popular Culture, The Popular Culture Explosion, Popular Culture and the Expanding Consciousness*, and *Dimensions of Detective Fiction*.

"DAVY CROCKETT, KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER." Davy Crockett, as he appeared on the cover of the Davy Crockett Almanack, 1837 (left) and in the television show, starring Fess Parker and Buddy Ebsen (right) in the 1950s. Certain themes of our popular culture have persisted through much of our history.

IV: AMERICA'S POPULAR CULTURE: GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Ray B. Browne

The strands of American popular culture have remained essentially the same from Colonial days to the present because they have always responded to and reflected life in this country.

Among the most important of these have been the sense that America was special, a belief in equality, a penchant for violence, and the concept of a melting pot. But above all has been the desire for entertainment.

From almost the earliest days, this cultural response was determined by the fact that this country was the "New World." It held, for whites, at least, the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—because, it was believed, God had willed that the people make it their "Promised Land," the place where their dreams could come true.

This attitude was strengthened through the years because the American genius for technological growth could work in a country politically amenable, incredibly rich in natural resources, and blessed with a generally moderate climate.

There have been changes in points of view and emphasis through the years, to be sure, as changing physical and intellectual conditions have modified the people's ways of life. But throughout, the amalgam of the people, the political system, and the land has developed a general and constant "American point of view," with various themes that we call "The American Way of Life."

A Nation Apart

One of the strongest of these themes was an insistence from almost the earliest days—when the Puritans came to worship as they pleased—that this country was special.

People knew instinctively that "Americans" were different, as the eighteenth-century French philosopher Crevecoeur noted in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). Benjamin Franklin, considered by many the prototypical native of this country, completely though painfully gave up his early allegiance to the king and thereafter thought and self-consciously acted like an "American."

The Revolutionary War forged a new nation, and the Civil War was fought so that, in the words of Lincoln's

"Gettysburg Address" (1863), this "New Nation" should "not perish from the earth."

This same feeling of special mission justified in the people's eyes their drive across the continent, as they pushed the Indian ever westward and took land from the Mexicans. This sense of purpose also inspired the sacrifices necessary to "make the world safe for democracy" in two world wars. It is revealed today in President Carter's emphasis on upholding "human rights" throughout the world.

Equality for All?

Belief in equality and equal opportunity for all has constituted a second, overriding theme in American popular culture. It was implied in the *Mayflower* "Compact" (1620), was stated explicitly in the Declaration of Independence, and was guaranteed by the Constitution, though only after the addition of the Bill of Rights and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. It is the basis of the American Dream—the belief that in this country one is free to achieve any goal, to accumulate wealth, to live in any life-style. The rise of the common man in national politics—Davy Crockett to Congress in 1827, Jackson (the common man's candidate) to the presidency in 1829, and Lincoln in 1861—was proof to many people of the Dream's reality.

Ironically and tragically, the Dream that has become reality to many WASP Americans has not been fulfilled for millions of others who have suffered discrimination and have been wracked by the violence that often accompanies inequality. For example, the Puritans assaulted the Indians, and other whites—the Quakers, for instance—who disagreed with their philosophy. Discrimination could be seen continuing in the nineteenth century in the "No Irish Need Apply" signs and songs, and in the campaign against the "Yellow Peril." The "Whites Only" signs over drinking fountains and toilets in the South did not disappear until the 1950s and 1960s.

But violence was not restricted to use against minorities. It has constantly been a major muscle in the body of American popular culture. It was always a grim companion on the Frontier. The penchant for violent physical action can be traced throughout American literature, but especially in Western novels, pulp magazines, comic books, television, and movies.

Rural vs. Urban

Much popular culture in America has centered through the years on a conflict between ruralism and urbanism, the country and the city. From the time of the first settlements, when people huddled together for protection, there has been fear of the "Out-There," of the unknown. But to many of the earliest Americans, who came from poverty-ridden urban ghettoes of Europe, the countryside represented freedom and dignity, the Garden of Eden.

Articulated by Jefferson and embodied in the movement of millions of pioneers and settlers, this feeling of the superiority of the country has persisted. The rural-urban conflict is revealed in the writings of most nineteenth-century authors, especially Hawthorne and Melville, and in our day by numerous authors, for example, William Goldman and Irwin Shaw.

The pro-country mood is perhaps best demonstrated today by the exodus from the city to suburbia and exurbia. On the other hand, the city, with its theaters, parks, and museums, has always been a cultural magnet for many people. This attractiveness undoubtedly accounts for the current return wave from the suburbs to the city.

Another important theme has been the concept of America as a "melting pot" of cultures. Although Indians, blacks, and to a lesser extent other minorities were excluded, Americans through the centuries have prided themselves on their diversity. The Statue of Liberty became a symbol of refuge, inviting the world's tired and hungry to this country, where diverse people and cultures would be melted down into "The American Character."

Lately, however, this assimilation drive has been reversed. America now is encouraging instead a pluralism that urges people to rediscover and treasure their origins and identities. The power of this drive was seen in the extraordinary reception of Alex Haley's novel *Roots* (1976) and the television program made from it, which attracted the largest audience ever for any television show.

Entertainment

Perhaps the single most overriding theme in American popular culture from the seventeenth century on has been the desire for entertainment. Though the Puritans opposed too much pastime activity, Americans generally have been not only hardworking but also hardplaying, encouraging all known kinds of diversion and creating others.

From the earliest Colonial days, jugglers, tumblers, parades, pageants, and celebrations flourished. The first permanent theater in America was built in New York in 1767. The Minstrel show was well established by the time of the Civil War, and vaudeville by 1880. The girly show, introduced in 1866, joined with the minstrel show and developed into the first musical comedy, *The Wizard of Oz* (1904), giving birth to one of our favorite forms of theater today.

Numerous other pastimes developed through the years. Magazines and "best-sellers" started in the seventeenth century. Baseball and football began in the mid-nineteenth century. Dime novels started after the Civil War, comic strips at the turn of the present century, and comic books in the 1930s. Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) set the pattern for Western fiction, detective stories, "created" by Edgar Allan Poe, came of age in the pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, and science fiction began with Poe.

Music came with the Colonists, and proliferated and diversified into the numerous kinds with us today. By the 1890s, a movie industry was born. After 1920 radio became a saturating element in our culture, to be superseded by television after 1947.

Our popular culture reflects the American experience and our strong drive to democratize our society.

Though we may rightly despise some aspects of it, on the whole we ought to take pride in it as rich expressions of our democracy. For to paraphrase Pogo, we have created this culture and it is us.

Hollywood: The Dream Factory

Television: The Pervasive Medium

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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UPI Photo

"OSCAR" AND THE HEAVYWEIGHTS. Actor Sylvester Stallone and World Heavyweight Champion Muhammad Ali (right), ham it up at the 49th Annual Academy Award presentation. Stallone played the title role in *Rocky*, a story of an underdog's triumph.

V: HOLLYWOOD: THE DREAM FACTORY

Robert Sklar

Hollywood!

The studio sound stages are empty, the props and costumes auctioned, the back lots turned into office buildings. The Garden of Allah and Romanoffs are gone, part of Hollywood Boulevard a sleazy strip of adult bookstores and fast food restaurants.

But the place retains its magic aura. The tourists come all the same, look at the old time stars' footprints at the Chinese Theatre, buy the maps that guide them past the present-day stars' homes.

Though a shadow of its former self, Hollywood still holds a firm grip on the public imagination as the popular culture capital of America—indeed, of the world.

The Dream Factory, they called Hollywood in its heyday. Every week, ten or more films came off the studios' assembly lines. For decades movies made in Hollywood dominated the world's screens.

All that has changed.

Television arrived. Political controversy in the 1940s disrupted the old Hollywood. A federal antitrust suit brought about a restructuring of the movie companies. Attendance dropped, then production.

From a weekly habit, moviegoing became an event, like going to the theater. People began to think of movies less as part of popular culture, more as one of the arts.

The Dream Factory shifted to the small screen. Television producers took over some of the old studios. Their programs reach far more viewers than the movies did even at the height of their success. On television, Hollywood's products are more popular than ever.

Purveyors of Dreams

But movies still fulfill a unique role as purveyors of dreams to a popular audience. Even today, Hollywood's glamorous attraction derives more from movies than from television. Our feelings about current films are passionately formed and avidly debated.

Movies occupy a much more central place in contemporary popular culture than simple numbers would indicate.

The reasons for this are partly psychological. Our reactions are shaped by our personal histories, our cultural backgrounds, even our momentary moods—what pleases us one day may be distressing the next, or the reverse.

Nevertheless, some aspects of moviegoing seem to

have a common impact. As we sit in the darkened theater, watching larger-than life-size figures moving freely through time and space, we may easily enter into a dreamlike state. We feel a sense of heightened power and awareness, and a close identification with the heroes and heroines on the screen.

In real life our dreams are often troubled. Movies, with their fictional plots, can provide emotionally satisfying resolutions—an underdog's triumph, a wrong righted, a true love fulfilled.

When this happens, we walk out of the theater with that familiar "bigger-than-life" feeling of well-being. A recent film that gave audiences that experience was the Academy Award-winning *Rocky*, the story of an Italian-American club boxer who gets a crack at the heavyweight title.

Historical Role

The roots of our attachment to movie heroes and heroines also lie in the specific way movies became a part of our cultural life early in this century.

When movies became part of the American scene around 1900, they were looked down upon by the comfortable classes. Movies found their first audience in the big city working-class districts and immigrant ghettoes, where it cost only a nickel to see their flickering images in hot, rank storefront theaters.

The silent movies were accessible to the polyglot audience of Eastern and Southern European immigrants as language-based entertainment, such as theater and magazines, was not. The newcomers, faced with the task of shaping a culture from their old country origins and their new urban setting, discovered new heroes and heroines in the movie players.

Actors and actresses were not simply characters in a filmed story. They were people the audience saw week after week, striving through the different conventionalized plots to gain success or romance, some small, secure foothold in pursuit of the American dream.

Familiar faces, such as those of Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish, served as surrogates for the immigrant audience, achieving a triumph one week, suffering tragedy the next. Though film players were anonymous, the working class public recognized its favorites. Enterprising producers, themselves immigrants who learned the trade operating nickelodeon theaters, began to promote the favored players into stars.

Throughout the history of American movies, the beguiling and emblematic images of the stars have given the medium its pervasive and lasting power as a force in popular culture.

Meeting Audience Needs

The needs of that early working class audience also fundamentally shaped motion picture content. Seeking release from their toils, moviegoers liked to laugh, to be amazed, shocked, titillated. The moviemakers provided their viewers with large doses of comedy, science and horror fantasy, western and urban violence, and sexual innuendo.

By World War I, most of the major movie companies were run by immigrant entrepreneurs, such as Adolph Zucker and William Fox, who had sprung from the same urban ghettoes where the movies first showed their popular potential. These men were the "moguls" and "tycoons" of later legend.

Although some immigrants, such as newspaperman Joseph Pulitzer, had previously risen to prominence in the communications field, the movies were the first medium of popular culture that seemed to be broadly controlled by people who did not share the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the traditional cultural elites.

With their upstart producers and indecorous content, the movies were for a long time—and indeed in some places still are—regarded by many Americans as a disreputable and unsafe form of entertainment, providing access to false values and ideals, contributing to juvenile delinquency, sexual promiscuity, and other social ills.

For some years a number of states and municipalities precensored movies before they were allowed to be shown. Following a threatened boycott of theaters by the Roman Catholic organization, the Legion of Decency, the movie industry from the 1930s to the 1960s strictly enforced a production code. Over the past decade it has simply rated movies for their suitability for young viewers.

Fantasy Images

Despite such criticisms and controls, movies expanded steadily in importance in American popular culture for half a century. The view of America they presented was attacked as unrealistic, but the producers realized that their fantasy images of American life were exactly the point of their success.

The movies have never offered a full and rounded portrait of American society on the screen.

Rather, the most characteristic feature has been their presentation of extremes—extremes of wealth and glamour, of violence and action. Think of the great movie names, such as Garbo, Hepburn, Bette Davis, Cagney, Bogart, John Wayne. The lure of their pictures and performances has been their capacity to take us out of our own lives and into distant and exotic worlds—the Park Avenue penthouse, the underworld hideout, the Western frontier.

A Star Is Born and *King Kong*, recent remakes of motion picture classics, have reemphasized the appeal both to audiences and producers of extremes of glamour and exotic violence.

Nevertheless, the movies have also portrayed a counterbalancing image of social harmony—the traditional American ideal of happiness achieved through family and community. The Andy Hardy series of the 1930s and 1940s, starring Mickey Rooney, offered one of the most long-lasting and successful versions of this social ideal.

Since the rise of television and the subsequent decline of motion picture attendance, the movies have less and less often tried to present this balancing social theme. The most successful recent movies—*Jaws, The Godfather, Star Wars*—have been closer to the extreme.

The movies today are preeminently a popular culture medium of spectacle, and have left to television the opportunity and challenge of creating images of who we are now.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF TV? Characters such as Archie and Edith Bunker of "All in the Family," portrayed by Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton, seem to be real human beings. They represent something new in American entertainment.

VI: TELEVISION: THE PERVASIVE MEDIUM

Robert Sklar

Television inherited the mantle of the movies as the most prominent and pervasive medium in American popular culture, and we are in the midst of a heated debate about its possible effects. It is sometimes hard to remember that similar debates were carried on with the introduction of other technological innovations—the railroad, the telephone, the automobile, the movies.

Of course television's impact on society may be so much greater than that of any other device as to make comparisons irrelevant. The statistics of television use are staggering. The television set in the average American home is now turned on more than six hours a day. Children spend more time watching television than in any other activity except sleeping. Many Americans use television as their sole source of news.

Television's to Blame

Television is blamed for causing children to become more aggressive. Television is blamed for leading viewers to perceive society as violent. Television is blamed for lowering college admission test scores. Television is blamed for a decline in reading, for making children passive. Television is accused of turning America into a nation of sheep.

Anything that has happened in the past quarter century that people do not like has been blamed on television. They have been less inclined to give television credit for good things—an increase in cosmopolitanism, for example, or a decline in racial prejudice, for which television, as a rich source of information about other peoples and other places, may have played a part.

How you judge television may depend on what you think about the direction of American society in the past twenty-five years. But no matter what your verdict, the odds are very great that you watch it daily, and would not like to live without it even for a very short time.

Television became the primary medium of American popular culture during a suburban era. Although TV had been developed technologically in the 1920s and 1930s,

it was not until after World War II, in the late 1940s, that receiving sets were made commercially available to the general public.

This was a period of vast suburban expansion. Returning servicemen, aided by federal loans, and many other Americans were able to own homes for the first time. Television became the home entertainment for a home-centered age.

Television became an anthology of all previous forms of American popular entertainment. From radio, the earlier home medium, it took soap operas, dramatic series, sports events, talk shows, and even to some extent the news, leaving radio primarily to broadcast music. From movies it took principally old movies from the studio vaults, and eventually took over the making of what used to be called program pictures—the low budget adventure, mystery, Western and detective movies. It took elements from vaudeville and variety shows, night club acts, Broadway musicals.

Television as Cornucopia

Television became a cornucopia of entertainment. People did not have to go out, pay for babysitters, pay for parking, pay for tickets, to be entertained. Television, after the initial cost of the set, was free. It was paid for by commercial advertisers, whose messages comprised (and still do) a considerable share of television programming—a minimum of six minutes every hour. Many viewers, moreover, find commercials more entertaining than the programs they interrupt.

There are two opposing perspectives today on the development of television entertainment. One view is that the Golden Age of television was in the 1950s. In those days, when sets were relatively expensive and the audience was still a minority of Americans, composed mainly of middle-class and well-to-do viewers, serious dramatic programs made up almost half the top-rated shows. Week after week, on such programs as "Studio One" and "Television Playhouse," viewers could see live dramas written by Reginald Rose, Rod Serling, Paddy Chayefsky and other television playwrights.

For comedy, there were performers like Ernie Kovacs, Lucille Ball, Sid Caesar, Milton Berle, Groucho Marx. Jackie Gleason, Bob Hope and Ed Sullivan offered variety hours. Edward R. Murrow pioneered with news documentaries.

As television became increasingly a mass medium reaching all elements of society, according to this view, it tended to value quantity over quality. Programs were tailored for the highest possible ratings, in order to attract advertisers and increase revenue. Networks became copycats. If Westerns proved popular, they flooded the screen with cowboys; if crime and mystery caught on, there was a glut of cops and detectives.

Today's Golden Age

The Golden Age, as others see it, is with us now. It began in the early 1970s when several situation comedies broke through the old stereotypes and restrictions that previously limited television comedies only to trivial subjects, like mistaken identities or faulty toasters. The new situation comedy dealt with how people really feel—with attitudes toward race, sexuality, aging, loneliness.

Producers Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin pioneered by adapting a controversial BBC series, "Till Death Us Do Part," and after some difficulty aired it on CBS as "All in the Family." Even earlier Grant Tinker of MTM Enterprises had launched "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," the saga of a career woman coping with life in the big city.

Out of these producers and shows have come much of the significant comedy programming of the 1970s—"Sanford and Son," "Maude," "The Jeffersons," "The Bob Newhart Show," "Rhoda," "Phyllis" and many more. Almost any regular television viewer can name a dozen or more characters from these programs. They seem as familiar as neighbors; indeed, we may spend more time with them than we do with our neighbors.

The New Comic Realism

This is a point not to be taken lightly. Archie and Edith Bunker, Lou Grant, Ted Baxter, Mary Richards, Maude and Walter and the others have been coming into our homes regularly for years. They represent something new in American entertainment.

Movie stars like Garbo and Bogart were distant, magical figures. Earlier television comics like Jackie Gleason in "The Honeymooners" and Lucille Ball in "I Love Lucy" were comedy stars first, fictional characters second. In the case of contemporary situation comedies we relate more to the characters than to the actors. They seem real human beings, whose struggles and problems recapitulate and illuminate our own.

The success of situation comedy characters in entering our lives is seen by critics of television as one further example of the medium's dangers. It is as if television's fictions seem more real to us than reality itself.

There is also continuing concern that the steady diet of situation comedies, soap operas, game shows, movies and action-adventure series that the commercial networks offer, popular as they may be with the mass audience, barely scratches the surface of television's potential.

In an attempt to develop this potential, the Federal government in 1967 established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and organized existing educational and noncommercial stations into a national network, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

The public television schedule offers British series like "Upstairs, Downstairs," foreign movies and documentaries. In recent years more federal funding has been available for American dramatic productions for television, resulting in such significant programs as the "Visions" series of dramas, "The American Short Story" series and "The Adams Chronicles."

Perhaps the most important—and certainly the most popular—public television offerings have been the educational entertainment programs produced by Children's Television Workshop, "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company."

Television's legacy to American society remains in dispute. If you have read this far, it may indicate at least that television has not eroded your desire to read—when the subject is television.

Popular Culture and Popular Music: Changing Dreams

Popular Music: Sounds of the People

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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UPI Photo

THE COUNTRY-WESTERN DREAM. Johnny and June Carter Cash, performing at Mississippi Memorial Stadium in June, 1975, symbolize the dream of the self-made person and open spaces.

VII: POPULAR CULTURE AND POPULAR MUSIC: CHANGING DREAMS

Nat Hentoff

When a member of the Chinese delegation to the United Nations asked an American friend not long ago if all American popular music sounded the same—as he supposed from listening to the radio—the friend arranged for the Chinese official to hear an evening of jazz.

He listened with great absorption and then said, "I believe I understand. This is American folk music. It has your own kind of spirit. Are there other original American musical sounds and forms?"

Many, he was told, and in a wide variety of popular as well as folk music. The man from the Chinese delegation has since been looking into this unexpected news about America.

Among the performers I have suggested he hear to broaden his sense of our diversity is James Talley. Not a jazzman, but rather a 33-year-old, Oklahoma-born, popular singer-composer who is a favorite of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter and millions more Americans.

Talley's music—a blend of country and blues from the South and Southwest—celebrates working people, from truckers to "black lung" miners, telling of the plain, everyday valor that enables them to survive. Just as jazz began by telling of everyday black valor. And like black music, James Talley's has deep American roots.

He comes from a long tradition in American popular music—going back to Woody Guthrie and Jimmie Rodgers ("The Singing Brakeman"), and beyond them, to the music makers of the American frontier who sang of independence and of the hard work, with some whiskey on the side, that might make their dreams take palpable shape.

Dreams

Dreams power all forms and idioms of popular music. Different dreams nourished by people of profoundly different backgrounds. In what came to be called country and western music, the early dream was of unending spaciousness, always somewhere unspoiled to travel.

And Americans now, so many of them still on the move or at least fantasizing a move to a last big strike, are still attracted to traveling music and the dauntless loners who create it. Kris Kristofferson, for instance, and Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, Charlie Rich.

These present-day songsters are seen as perhaps the last of the frontiersmen, needing no college degrees or professional licenses to reap large rewards as they roam the land, riding their guitars. In an age of corporate envelopment, they keep alive the dream of the self-made American whose success comes not from "selling out" but just from being himself.

And there are other kinds of dreams. Black music, for instance, was eventually to color all popular sounds, even white country. In the "cry" of Charlie Rich's voice are echoes of the black work and religious songs he heard as a white boy in a small Arkansas farming town. But the *foundations* of black music are obviously built on centuries-long experiences largely unknown to other Americans. So viscerally unknown still that the televising of Alex Haley's *Roots* was a shock to millions of his fellow white citizens.

From the beginning of slavery here, black music was nothing less than a way of psychic survival. Field hollers were used to send messages; religious songs both shared the spirit and, in code, prophesied freedom. And the blues, as novelist Ralph Ellison has pointed out, were "one of the techniques through which Negroes have survived and kept their courage."

The blues were not only about hard, shattering times but were also ironic, defiant, proud. There was triumph in the blues, with heroes who had gone so far down they had nowhere to go but up. And up they came.

The Blues

It is no wonder that the blues have never lost their strength, having been tested so much. And so the textures of the blues continue to pervade the "soul" music that now reaches huge numbers of white as well as black listeners.

More showy than classic blues, rhythmically driving, and mixed with gospel, "soul music" distills the black urban experience while also projecting young dreams of love and power. From Aretha Franklin to Stevie Wonder, both soul "superstars," black music still propels a directness of emotional force that no other American musical language has yet equalled.

Although blues recordings and performances were once limited to black communities, except for a few white aficionados, since the 1950s the blues and other black music have "crossed over" to all other popular audiences. Accordingly, the Top 40 lists are not only thoroughly integrated but also contain records by white singers and musicians who are heavily influenced by black sounds.

In fact, there is not a single white rock band unaffected by the blues. Rock music began in the early 1950s as a white version of what was then called black "rhythm and blues." As white and black strains merged more completely than ever before in American popular music, ecumenicism became the rule.

In the 1960s, rock—mirroring the "counterculture's" impatience with restrictions and categories—fused country cadences, jazz, blues, and various styles of pop music, from ballads to simple "good time" songs. Significantly, the most widely influential figure in the history of American rock, Elvis Presley, was himself stylistically an amalgam of what used to be heard as opposites—white country music vocalists and what he called "the real lowdown" black Mississippi blues singers.

Egalitarian Rock

One of the key reasons so many of the young have been drawn to rock has been its seemingly egalitarian nature. That is, in previous generations, it was generally felt that the making of popular music was limited to such highly skilled and sophisticated specialists as George Gershwin and Cole Porter. Even the singers, from Bing Crosby to Frank Sinatra, with their difficult big-band experience and coolly urban manner, appeared to belong to a distant aristocracy.

Rock, on the other hand, has given status to thousands of singers and instrumentalists who look and act very much like their fans; who write their own songs; and who, in many cases, have skills not too far removed from those of a dedicated amateur.

Reviewing such a rock combo, Big Brother and the Holding Company—the group that featured white blues singer Janis Joplin—a counterculture critic wrote in the 1960s, "It's probably the secret dream of every kid everywhere to just do things they dig doing and be rewarded for it. America—as only America, the land where dreams come true, could—is making that dream come true for Big Brother."

And so, from the 1960s to the present, more of the young have been enthusiastically immersed in popular music than at any other period of our history. It is, after all, their music.

Unlike the popular songs of earlier decades and centuries, rock is not primarily directed at grown-ups. It's about freedom *from* grown-ups; freedom to leap right into the middle of experience, without having to lay back for fear of what some parent or teacher may think.

Elvis Presley did indeed succeed Porter and Gershwin. And in turn, he was at least partially dislodged by a more outspoken rebel, Bob Dylan, who, in the 1960s, spoke for and to a whole generation of listeners who were, like him, anti-war and anti-all-establishments.

In the 1970s, and beyond, more lone stars in their early twenties will inevitably continue to speak to the dreams and nightmares of each new generation. There still remains, however, ample popular music for new and even for older adults. They still listen to the musical survivors of the 1950s and 1960s; and as James Talley says, they listen to remember the values of their quicksilver youth, as contrasted, if there is a contrast, with their values now.

Popular music always speaks, among other things, of dreams—which change with the times.

UPI Photo

SATCHMO: PATRIARCH OF JAZZ. Louis Armstrong serenades his wife and a sphinx during one of his trips abroad. Jazz, one way in which Americans have expressed themselves through music, has been exported throughout the world.

VIII: POPULAR MUSIC: SOUNDS OF THE PEOPLE

Nat Hentoff

Sidney Bechet, the moon-faced soprano saxophonist from New Orleans, who was among the first to introduce American jazz to Europe, once explained why he had to play: "Me, I want to explain myself so bad. I want to have myself understood. And the music, it can do that. The music, it's my whole story."

Bechet's credo has been at the core of American popular music from its vigorously diversified beginnings. "Art music" or "serious music" was for the relatively few. It was predominantly shaped by European dictates, and required specialized and expensive training.

But popular music, starting with folk songs, was unabashedly homemade and invited democratic, communal participation—whether in a barroom, a logging camp, or an Appalachian hollow. And for the singer or player of this pridefully indigenous music, it has always been a way of getting himself understood. Not only himself but also the ways of life, the priorities, the complaints of the particular segment of the American grain that nurtured him.

In the isolated mountains and backwoods of the South, for example, transplanted and transmuted Scotch-Irish-English ballads spoke from the beginning for the stubborn independence of the people there and buttressed their sense of identity, of specialness.

In the East, folk tunes—self-celebration—and topical

songs, roisterously vocalized in the taverns and hawked on the streets as cheap broadsides, flourished during the Colonial period.

Even Puritan ministers could not eliminate the desire of settlers in the new world to explain and celebrate themselves through music. One such minister spoke bitterly in 1720 of the sounds of the common man: "Left to the mercy of every unskillful Throat to chop and alter, twist and change, according to their odd Humours and Fancies, they sound like Five Hundred different tunes roared out at the same time."

Through the American centuries, similar jeremiads have been directed at various genres of popular music by clergymen, educators, and others fervently convinced that music which is not "serious" or at least "respectable" can corrode the spirit and numb the mind.

So, in the early 1920s, jazz was accused of being a direct cause of crimes of passion. And in the early 1970s, Richard Nixon, among others, was so concerned that rock lyrics were inciting antisocial behavior—from draft resistance to marijuana consumption to profligate sex—that the Federal Communications Commission tried to censor rock recordings. Not for obscenities, which were, in any case, forbidden on the air, but for heresy.

The rock musicians, however, were actually doing—for a much larger, nation-wide audience—what Appalachian songsters, New England seamen, western wranglers, and other popular bards had been engaged in long before. They were explaining themselves through their music, and they were also forging links of communication with others who shared their priorities, hopes, fantasies, ways of wit, and ways of coping with loss.

The Genteel Tradition

American popular music has not, of course, always been controversial. The music of Stephen Foster, for instance, was an extension of a significant mid-nineteenth-century development, the advent of "genteel" songs. These, as American music scholar H. Wiley Hitchcock points out, "were aimed at the home—at the typical American parlor, with its little square piano or reed organ, its horsehair-stuffed sofa, its kerosene lanterns and candlelight." Music for devoted amateurs, its texts were "generally one step removed from ordinary American speech."

This "genteel" music also expressed the values—somewhat sentimental and idealized—of a particular group of Americans. So did the American phenomenon of vaudeville that grew in the "concert saloons" of the 1850s, went on to flourish in theaters, and expired when the movies permanently distracted its audiences.

Vaudeville and saloon songs were the popular music of the burgeoning city folk, who liked their fun in overflowing portions and preferred expansively romantic ballads, along with rollicking novelties, bawdy and otherwise. For those in places far from "live" vaudeville, there were sheet music and, in time, recordings. A national popular music was being created.

The Nationalization of Pop

With the advent of radio and the movies, the nationalization of the pop song was greatly intensified. While parts of the population held on to and kept regenerating their own musical heritages—white country and western music, black sounds, and rural regional ballads—Tin Pan Alley, the Broadway stage, the Hollywood studios, and the radio networks were fashioning what most Americans now define as popular music.

These mass-production sources also shaped and reflected certain popular values. Romance overshadowed all. Rather sanitized, dream-like romance, however, by contrast with the direct, nearly palpable expression of earthly love in black music.

Optimism was another basic ingredient. Even during the Depression, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" was a rarity. In this music, America was still the land of infinite possibility where, over the rainbow, one might find a million-dollar baby in a five-and-ten-cent store.

Departing from the sounds and rhythms of the Hollywood and Broadway stage, the songs of the 1960s, broadly called "rock," encompassed elements of blues, country, and Hispanic music.

Rock was and is in defiant opposition to the polished, skillfully crafted music of Lorenz Hart, Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers, Harold Arlen, and others who had previously set the standards for American popular song.

Rock's Rebellion

Often raw and poundingly loud, rock rebelled against both the music and the values of the older generations. In these songs, sex, while not pornographically depicted, was much more openly experienced and enjoyed. Optimism was also much tempered. Life was no longer an upwardly mobile crystal staircase in a land of unending plenty. Ecology came into popular music, as did a steady electronic indictment of unexamined materialism.

The music itself was ebullient and became a common language, a way of mutual identification, for hordes of the young denouncing the herd instinct of their elders.

The main directions of our music will change again—as always, unpredictably. In the meantime, while mass popular music remains within the flexible confines of rock, a growing number of younger musicians are exploring older musical roots. A number of country players, such as Willie Nelson, are discarding string sections and complex recording techniques, opting instead for simpler songs and backgrounds with more traditional sounds.

Black musicians, such as trumpeter Leo Smith, while forging ahead with avant-garde jazz, are simultaneously studying the heritage available to them from the work of Louis Armstrong and other patriarchs of jazz. And Randy Newman, among other popular balladeers, is exploring a conversational, story-telling style that picks up the way a wide range of Americans actually talk and think.

Wherever American music goes, it will continue to be created in a multiplicity of idiomatic tongues, and the best of its makers will keep on exemplifying the dictum of jazzman Charlie Parker: "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn." Or your guitar. Or your voice.

Sports: The Pleasure of the Flesh

Sports: Instant Legends and Super Heroes

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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UPI Photos

WE'RE NUMBER ONE. Jubilant fans climb atop a city bus in Pittsburgh as they celebrate the Steelers' victory in the Super Bowl, January 12, 1974.

IX: SPORTS: THE PLEASURE OF THE FLESH

Robert Lipsyte

On the day the Steelers clinched their second straight Super Bowl appearance, the streets of Pittsburgh were suddenly thronged with people jabbing their forefingers at a wintry sky and screaming, "We're number one, we're number one!"

It didn't seem to matter that day that the teachers were still on strike in Pittsburgh, that there had been no public education in the city for weeks, that millions of lives were feeling dislocation and damage; the Steelers—hyped as a mythic extension of the city—had won to show the world that the Iron City was "O.K., Jack," and deserved to be plugged into the national happy news network. For the moment, at least, it was a hero city of super people.

Those cries of "We're number one!", from major league cities and from high school gyms, have been described lately by social scientists as symptoms of the growing need of Americans to identify with tangible and respected organizations; the increasing fragmentation of American life has made sports fandom a hook to hang onto.

The Opiate of the People

More and more commentators have begun describing spectator sports as "the opiate of the people," as the "modern bread and circuses" and as the nation's "real religion" (while describing religion as America's real spectator sport), as if it were a seventies' phenomenon, sprung full-blown from the swollen coffers of the television networks, instead of a logical progression in the

growing cultural importance of sports as a shaper of ethics, values and definitions.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the playing and watching of competitive games have been promoted as healthful activities for both the individual and the nation. Youth will develop courage and self-control, while Age will find blissful nostalgia. Or so we were told. Families will discover new lines of internal communication, and immigrants will find shortcuts to recognition as Americans.

Industry, the military, government, the media have promoted this faith in sports, and in so doing have imposed the values of the arena and the locker room upon our national life.

"Only winners are truly alive," said George Allen of the Washington Redskins, one of the all-time winningest coaches and a friend of presidents. "Winning is living. Every time you win, you're reborn. When you lose, you die a little."

There are dissenters, of course, more and more these days, ranging from parents trying to defuse the tense competitiveness of Little League programs to such sports radicals as Dave Meggyesy, the apostate all-pro linebacker, who said: "Football is an attempt to sell a blown out, smacked out people, fighting inflation, the exploitation of their work, of their earth, that our system is still socially, economically and politically viable."

Impact of Sports

Heretic or defender of the faith, or non-participant, there is no escape from the impact of sports. Traditionally, sports has acted as the first separator of the sexes; sometime soon after kindergarten, half the population—the girls—were cut from the team, literally or symbolically handed the majorette's baton and told to prepare for their careers as encouragers of men.

In recent years, the resurgence of the women's movement has significantly increased the number of females who participate in sports, but equality on the playing fields is nowhere near as prevalent as one might guess from the current hype of female sports stars.

From the middle grades on, boys are divided into athletes and failed athletes, worthy and unworthy, just at a time when they are most confused about their bodies and their relationships with their peers.

Most Americans, early winnowed from organized sports, either turn away from sports entirely, or become avid fans, a pastime encouraged by daily newspapers (which typically fill 25% of their newshole with sports results and gossip), by television (for whom sports programming and revenue is a mainstay), and by the ritual man-chat that makes sports our most common currency of communication.

Those who have survived all the cuts to make a world-class amateur team or a professional club have beaten odds that have been figured at one in a thousand. (Even then, success is generally short-lived—few pros spend more than five years playing for pay.) They have usually sacrificed the chance to develop themselves socially, emotionally and intellectually, so narrow is their specialty. As Mel Rogers, a black high school basketball coach in Louisiana once pointed out, a boy who devotes his life to becoming president of the United States, even if he fails, will pick up enough experience and information along the way to make a successful and fulfilling career. A boy who devotes his life to becoming center for the Philadelphia 76ers had better get there if he expects to get anywhere at all.

Superficial Glory

Athletes are seemingly lionized in our society, but the adulation is superficial and comes mostly from children, groupies and the adult male jock worshipers that athletes hold in contempt. People usually want something from the athlete. "Thousands of people who don't know me," says Bill Bradley, the Rhodes Scholar who played ten years in the National Basketball Association, "use my participation as an excuse for non-action, as a fix to help them escape their everyday problems."

If the pro athlete sometimes seems "ungrateful" for this ephemeral and hypocritical celebrity status, small wonder that the black athlete, who has been most cruelly used by the sports industry, has led the way in demanding more concrete rewards in the form of super salaries. Spencer Haywood, the 19-year-old hero of the 1968 Olympic basketball team, set some sort of record by jumping from one college to another, then suddenly turning pro, then jumping to another league. It was very hard to argue with his credo: "If you're from the ghetto, it doesn't matter what you do or how you get it, only if you got it. What loyalties you got? To your family. To your (black) brothers and sisters. But to basketball? To some team? Forget it."

Sports is a socializer for work or war or depression. Listen to the historian, John A. Krout, prepare us in 1929 for tough innings: "During depression, with thousands out of work, sports helps refocus our attention on the Great American values and ideals, and also helps us remember that life does not begin and end with the dollar."

The New Spirituality

Forty-five years later, a Miami Dolphin lineman, Norm Evans, prepares us for the new spirituality: "I guarantee you Christ would be the toughest guy who ever played this game . . . Jesus was a real man, all right . . . aggressive and a tremendous competitor . . . I have no doubt he could play in the National Football League . . . He would be a star. . . ."

Even in golf, tennis and bowling, the sports with the greatest spectator/participant interface, the media thrust has been consumerism—the clothes, money and strength to buy more—rather than the joy of games.

Perhaps it is the lingering Puritan influence or the work ethic that compels us to justify our leisure, to make of sport a metaphor and a lesson and a preparation rather than a healthful high, the most fun a body can have in public. The emphasis on the discipline of sport, rather than the creativity, and on spectatorship rather than participation, has made sports into a work camp. Those who would break out to truly play have been made to sound radical.

"For starters," wrote the distance runner, Bruce Kidd, "we should stop preaching about sport's moral values. Sport, after all, isn't Lent. It's a pleasure of the flesh."

UPI Photo

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SUPER HEROES OF SPORTS. Joe Namath, Muhammad Ali, (left) and Billie Jean King (right) were living symbols of the hopes and dreams of millions of Americans.

X: SPORTS: INSTANT LEGENDS AND SUPER HEROES

Robert Lipsyte

Sports is an unsparing mirror of our life and fantasies. Nowhere is this easier to see than in sports' choice of its super heroes.

The Gold-Plated Age of American sports, that mid-sixties to late seventies era of instant legends and sudden millionaires and overnight bankrupts, was dominated by the images of three celebrity athletes whose impact on the nation's psyche was as deep and significant as their effect on the games they played.

Joe Namath, Billie Jean King, and Muhammad Ali were supreme performers at their peaks, now past, but each had something more. Call it magnetism or sex appeal or charisma, it allowed people to use them as extensions of their hopes and daydreams, as living symbols of the ultimate.

Broadway Joe

Physically tough, sentimental, street-wise men like Joe Namath flanked the assembly lines and daydreamed of dressing up on Saturday night, drinking with the boys, and chasing girls—their rewards for using their bodies as investment capital, as had their fathers and grandfathers. It is no accident that so many of the white football players are the sons and grandsons of those men who came to America from Eastern and South-Central Europe.

Namath's father had come from Hungary as a boy, settled in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, a steel-mill town, and instead of encouraging his four sons to play soccer, his own game (and Nelson Rockefeller's), he steered them into baseball and football. These were the Ameri-

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can sports, the high-risk, short-term games that could get an unscholastic "ethnic" some local recognition, discount clothes downtown, a municipal summer job, a free college education, and a one-way ticket out of town.

Joe made it to the University of Alabama, where he starred but never graduated. Then to New York, where the owner of the Jets, a weakling team in a shaky new league that desperately needed a television contract, paid him $400,000 to play quarterback, an unheard of price in 1965.

America was astounded. What could be worth that much money? So everyone rushed out to see what $400,000 looked like, and in so doing justified the price.

The publicity was enormous, the stadium was packed, the networks were ready to make a deal. And Namath, long before he showed his truly electrifying talent, was authenticated in the popular mind by the price tag on his arm.

Image and Reality

Had Namath really been the Sixties Superstud of his image—cool, hip, mod, swinging, the bait to hook the youth cult buck—he could never have been the effective athlete he was. Broadway Joe was really a throwback to an earlier tradition in sports; he was dedicated to his team, highly responsible in his work habits, and loyal to his friends and family. His longish hair, his occasional beards, his peacock clothes were a reflection of what bank tellers and steel humpers were wearing on *their* weekends.

It was only the middle-management, white-collar "technojockeys," the young men who were buying pro football as a romanticized psychodrama of their own corporate careers, who somehow saw Namath as outrageous or liberated or transcendent.

Numero Uno

Billie Jean's road to the top was more difficult and less traveled than Joe's, but she was no pioneer—Babe Didrickson and Althea Gibson, among others, had suffered and sacrificed before her. A great male athlete is always considered a superman, while a great female athlete has traditionally been thought of as something less than a complete woman.

Billie Jean became special in the same ruthless way everyone else becomes special. She let her marriage slide into a sporadic relationship, she traveled continually for instruction and tournament experience, she underwent extensive knee surgery, she blotted out anything that might distract her from becoming what she called Numero Uno.

When people asked her why she didn't go home and have babies, she would snap right back, "Why don't you ask Rod Laver why he doesn't stay home?"

Ironically, it eventually took a man to authenticate Billie Jean. On September 20, 1973, in a grotesque extravaganza in the Houston Astrodome that brought tennis into big-time show biz, Little Myth America beat Bobby Riggs, a male of comparable size, but considerably less championship experience, twenty-six years older, and of far less accomplishment.

That Billie Jean would represent all women in such a contest was logical—she *was* Number One. The trick, of course, was that Riggs, a middle-aged hustler, was allowed to represent all men. Nevertheless, the victory was seen as a feminist triumph, and the Joan of Ace joined Broadway Joe as a folk hero for the seventies.

As Namath emerged from what has been called "the rise of the unmeltable ethnics," so King was a natural product of the women's movement.

The Greatest

But Muhammad Ali, as befits a hero who rose and fell and rose again, came out of the confluence of several movements.

The earliest professional athletes in America were black slaves—boxers, jockeys, and oarsmen. As soon as money, prestige, and mythic symbolism were offered to sports heroes, the blacks were squeezed out. They have yet to regain their places in rowing and at the racetrack.

In the twentieth century, they began boxing again, and by the sixties they were on their way to dominating most major sports. Black sports participation was being encouraged by the establishment, to the detriment of black progress; all those young black men's energies and talents being diverted toward thousand-to-one shots in sports.

Cassius Clay of Louisville, a handsome, ebullient functional illiterate, came out of both traditions. He jocked his way through high school, won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics in Rome, and was "bought" by a group of ten Kentucky whiskey and tabacco millionaires who had, as Clay put it, "the complexion and connection to give me protection and direction."

Clay/Ali has never been given proper credit for understanding that his only hope for personal independence was through divorcement from mainstream America. His repudiation of his white owners, of Christianity, of the American involvement in Vietnam were of a piece with his unorthodox boxing style and his immodest publicity-seeking ("I am the greatest!").

His sense of his own destiny was far greater than Namath's or King's ("Moses had troubles, too, so did Jesus . . .") and his impact, of course, was not only greater than theirs, but his example made it easier for them to take political stands or challenge their own sports' bureaucracies.

The Exile

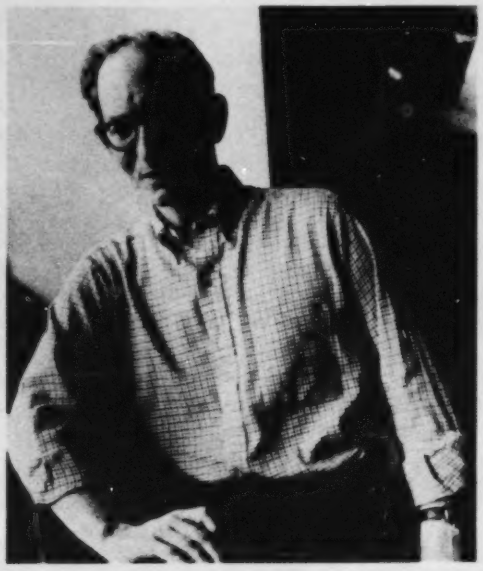
The three-and-a-half years of Ali's exile, in which he was illegally deprived of his livelihood, was the factor that authenticated Ali in the public mind. It proved even to people who hated his color, Muslim religion, and social positions that he was not "putting them on." He lost millions of dollars by refusing to be drafted, proof of his "sincerity."

Ultimately, his largest fandom developed in Africa and Asia among nonwhites. As Ali has said, "This is Joe Namath's country, but my world." His multimillion-dollar boxing spectacles abroad have helped make his face the most recognized on the planet.

But legends always die; sports legends are among the most intense and have the shortest shelf life. New generations demand their own heroes as prisms and standards.

And even now Namath and King and Ali are in the bathroom of Valhalla, selling us toiletries on television, the last stop before the certifiable obsolescence called sports immortality.

Politics and Popular Culture



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ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN. Like many other movies dealing with politics, this film, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, emphasizes that corruption is often at the center of political power.

XI: POLITICS AND POPULAR CULTURE

Andrew Hacker

The combination of politics and popular culture makes for an awkward alliance.

Images arise of candidates emulating entertainers, of campaigns reported as athletic contests, and of platforms with the appeal and veneer of commercials. However, politics still deals with complex and consequential issues, which deserve to be taken seriously. Candidates should be judged on their character and competence, not as coached or photogenic "personalities."

Popular culture, in contrast, is meant mainly for relaxation. Thus political issues are simplified, often to suit the media's modes of presentation. In like manner, politicians tend to be judged by how well they come across as public performers.

There is, of course, no shortage of purely fictional performances dealing with political themes. Every season comes up with a quota of TV scripts and series devoted to politics. While these treatments run the range from farce to tragedy, they share at least one denominator: they avoid controversial issues that might offend substantial segments of their audiences.

Most Americans still feel deeply about issues carrying political overtones. (There is less apathy than appearances often suggest.) Hence the risk of arousing resentments if issues seem unfairly presented. Indeed, there are many questions people would rather leave unraised. Like how equitably we distribute the nation's income; or the public's responsibility for Watergate and Vietnam.

So on the whole, the media stick to "safe" political subjects, or ones in which the audience itself comes out clean. Perhaps the most recurrent of these is corruption. At least everyone is against it.

The Triumph of Virtue

Virtue can of course triumph over corruption, as it did in Frank Capra's fabled *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), where a naive United States senator wins out over his cynical seniors—as it happens, by mobilizing

some boy scout troops. The more solemn movies like *Advise and Consent* (1962) and *The Best Man* (1964) also showed the victory of principle, if by some skewed casting of the villain.

A reverse approach has politics corrupting innocence. For example *All the King's Men* (1949), based on Robert Penn Warren's prize-winning novel, turns a rural idealist into a populist despot.

A more "modern" portrayal came with Robert Redford's performance as *The Candidate* (1972). Here the central figure was a young, public service lawyer from a comfortable, middle-class background, impelled into politics by his concern for the plight of the poor. However, the "system" gradually seduces him. Media experts persuade him to reduce his messages to thirty-second spots; interest groups exact concessions in return for contributions and endorsements.

Bit by bit he learns to live with these "realities," which the script implies are inevitable. (It even adds infidelity with an attractive campaign worker, presumably par for the political course.) Having the hero from suburban surroundings suggests that even well-meaning liberals must suffer a loss of innocence—and integrity.

Television, the most "mass" of the media, tends to skirt politics at its edges. Soap operas and situation comedies introduce issues—abortion, crime, race prejudice—but they either keep on a plane of interpersonal relations or attack offstage targets. Politicians come across as stock characters: crooks or buffoons or cynics. We turn on TV to unwind, not to ponder the state of the nation.

Popular Protests

In marked contrast, popular music has become a format for political expression, especially to younger audiences. Artists like the Beatles in the early 1960s, and Bob Dylan and Joan Baez amid the civil rights and Vietnam protests, offered subtle indictments of their society. Even today, popular performers such as James Taylor and Carole King show an America so gripped by materialism and amorality that political participation is futile. It may well be that all those stridently amplified stereos are the "radical" demonstrations of our era.

Moreover, politicians are attacked by both liberal and conservative cartoonists every day on the editorial pages of our nation's newspapers. And Trudeau's purely political comic strip, "Doonesbury," won a Pulitzer prize.

Thus via scripts, songs, cartoons, and scenarios, politics has found a place in our popular culture. But what of the reverse relationship: the impact of entertainment on the world of politics?

In simpler days, politicians crossed the country by railroad, pausing at whistle-stops and shaking hands at county fairs. Newspaper reports came in leisurely, gray-columned lengths, which were in turn discussed in general stores and city cafes. Citizens knew candidates at firsthand, and issues hit close to home.

Were things really that way? Fact and fancy often get entangled. Even so, we do know that voting reached its all-time highs in the 1890s and has been on a downswing ever since.

Campaign by Media

It has become commonplace to observe that people have little firsthand experience of politics. "A modern campaign is conducted nearly wholly in the press, especially on television," says Jann Wenner, editor of *Rolling Stone*. "There is the so-called news, which is at least half-contrived, controlled events, and there is advertising, wholly contrived and unashamed propaganda."

According to this analysis, the mode of presentation decides what will be seen. Televised news requires theatrical on-some-spot settings. Better, therefore, to carry cameras to a vandalized, half-finished housing project than have an economist explore prevailing paradoxes in interest rates.

Indeed, problems which defy easy depiction may get no mention at all. Much the same can be said of the spot advertising used by candidates during elections. (Or can we say that watching as aspirant walking pensively on a beach gives an underlying clue to his character?)

The Great Debates

The conclusion in many quarters is that the best way to attract an audience is by adding the dramaturgy of debate. This strategy apparently succeeded, both in 1960 and 1976, when the Kennedy-Nixon and Ford-Carter encounters broke records for political broadcasts.

Actually, they were less "debates" than two-person press conferences, responding to panels of reporters. At the same time, voters apparently felt they had gained added insight on the contenders, particularly in their composure under pressure. Still, subsequent discussions dwelled more on "who won?" than with the substantive content of the presentations.

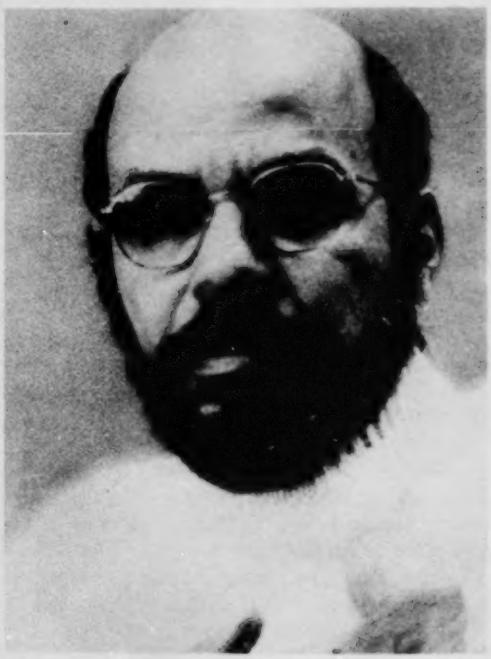
Is it the main interest of the media to make politics a spectator sport: a sort of stretched-out counterpart of the Super Bowl? The primaries can be seen as weekly episodes of a serial. Polls measure the nation's mind, finding enough "don't knows" and "undecideds" to keep even one-sided contests alive. We "watch" a campaign as if it were an event created for an audience, rather than a process whose very core is personal participation.

Thus many argue that by merging politics with popular culture, appearances win out over reality and the media constrain the message. Yet the critics are not agreed on the culprit. Some blame the top decision makers of the media, saying they impose their preferences on the public. Others claim that the communicators are simply responding to a citizenry that wants its news and views in capsules.

Yet it is possible to suggest that Americans are still political creatures, with ideas and interests of their own. Even at a distance they can size up the stature of a candidate and see the issues at stake in an election. Citizens certainly make mistakes and can succumb to alluring but misleading presentations. But it seldom happens when the outcome really counts.

"Voters are not fools," was the way a political scientist once put it. Indeed, it can be argued that exposure to modern media has heightened our sophistication. If that is so, we have a more acute political understanding and seek a politics that will meet our expectations.

Popular Culture: Minorities and the Media



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"MOVIN' ON UP": THE JEFFERSONS AND THE WILLISES. Increasing numbers of blacks are finding employment in television shows such as "The Jeffersons." Situation comedies, however, tend to trivialize serious ethnic problems.

XII: POPULAR CULTURE: MINORITIES AND THE MEDIA

Nathan Irvin Huggins

During the past twenty years, television and the movies have taken on more color as nonwhites have found more work in film, situation comedies, and TV commercials.

Black, Latin, and Asian Americans are now serving mass media's good-natured indulgence in ethnic humor just as Jewish and Italian Americans have been doing for years.

"Chico and the Man" brought us the light-hearted cleverness of the Puerto Rican/Chicano. "Good Times" shows us poor-but-honest blacks smiling through hardship. And "The Jeffersons" assures us that even success won't spoil black folks for comedy. Evenhandedly, television balances the bigotry of Archie Bunker with that of Fred Sanford.

Movie moguls, too, since the 1960s, have discovered a commercial potential in Afro-American subjects. While most have been "blaxploitation" films like *Superfly* and *Shaft*, some, like *Sounder* and *Cooley High*, were honest and thoughtful efforts to portray black life. One film, *Ganja and Hess*, was even exceptionally good cinema.

Black superstars are in the commercial entertainment galaxy. It was a historic event when, in 1939, Hattie McDaniel won an Academy Award for best supporting actress in *Gone with the Wind* and when, twenty-four years later, Sidney Poitier won the Oscar for best actor in *Lilies of the Field*. Perhaps it is a sign of some change that we would not consider such honors to black performers quite so remarkable today.

Illusions

It would appear we are a far cry from the pre-1960s when, fearful of offending southern white audiences, the television and movie industries flagrantly pandered racial bigotry. Some of these apparent changes regarding minorities and the media are real, but we must remind ourselves that mass media are purveyors of illusions, and the changes we see are likely to be far less than what we get.

Certainly there are more nonwhites on television today, but thoughtful treatment of ethnic life and issues are rare. Situation comedy will trivialize anything. Intermarriage in "The Jeffersons" is reduced to mere idiocy. Chronic underemployment for urban blacks is given no better treatment in "Good Times."

Of course, it is good to have a sense of humor and be able to laugh at ourselves, but the media generally give us nothing else.

It is pleasing, nevertheless, to see nonwhite performers making it in an industry dominated and defined by whites. Between TV commercials and one or two superstars, more money is going to nonwhite talent now than a few years ago.

We should not imagine, however, the plight of the minority artist has improved markedly in the last twenty years. Marketing and advertising men who run Hollywood prefer known personalities (from whatever background) to committed artists. Hollywood has "discovered" pitifully few black performers. It tends rather to draw "stars" who have already made their mark on the football field, the nightclub circuit, Las Vegas, and all too seldom the theater.

The superstar, once "made," tends to define the limits of major films about minority subjects. Producers of costly film projects need a superstar in the "package" to have any hope of raising money. Thus, to make *The Wiz*, it was thought better to choose Diana Ross to play the twelve-year-old Dorothy than teenager Stephanie Mills, who made the Broadway musical a spectacular success. Miss Ross can be packaged and sold as a commodity more easily than a highly talented youngster.

For every O.J. Simpson, Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, and Diana Ross, there are thousands of trained and talented professional actors and actresses who do not possess a celebrity that Hollywood can market. Until they make it big somewhere else, they are, with a few exceptions, not likely to find much success in film or television. White performers have some of these same problems, but there are far more roles and far more productions open to them.

Media Opportunities

Members of minorities—with a few exceptions such as Sidney Poitier—have not moved into the media industries in positions of producers, writers, or directors where they could affect programs. Those few who are producers and directors have almost no chance to choose or shape the character of their vehicles. The handful of writers who find work are viewed with suspicion whether they write about their own minority (they are presumed to have an ax to grind) or whether they attempt something general (they are not supposed to know about white folks).

Black writers are lucky to succeed at all in film and television despite increased portrayal of Afro-American subjects. Even the phenomenal television production of *Roots*—using several writers and directors—employed no black writer; a black director was given the chance to do just one episode.

Whites in the industry remain exclusive judges of what is suitable for viewing. They, in effect, define whatever ethnic content will get aired. Small wonder there is little authenticity in minority representation in the media.

It takes a lot of money as well as command of an industrial apparatus to produce movies and television. A modest estimate for a one-half hour television show is $250,000. *Rocky*, "a low-budget film," cost only $1.1 million. Such costs act as an effective censor to minority producers.

And things are hardly better in public broadcasting. It suffers serious budget limitations, and, like commercial television, the public network and stations find the Federal Communications Commission's "fairness doctrine"—obliging stations to grant equal time when one side of a controversy is aired—a sufficient reason to reject most programs that might have meaning to minorities.

Minority Exposure

At least television news has allowed minorities to bring their grievances before the public. The causes of such groups as freedom riders and marchers and Cesar Chavez' farm workers have been brought into the home. Leaders like Martin Luther King and Stokely Carmichael, accused persons like Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, and Joanne Little gained a national audience through television news broadcasting. We assume media exposure gained them sympathy and support.

But media exposure has cut both ways. The cameras recorded the White Backlash as eagerly as Black Power. They transmitted the riots in South Boston as quickly as the march on Washington. They broadcast the sentiments of the white, Pontiac, Michigan housewife protesting "forced busing" as earnestly as they had the achievement of Mrs. Rosa Parks in the Montgomery bus boycott.

Any group willing to make a display, break the public peace, engage in civil disobedience will catch the camera's eye and be carried into the homes of America. Few things short of disorder, however, will have broad media impact. And minority demonstrators have paid a higher price, in the way of jailings, beatings, and killings, than have their white counterparts.

Many do not share my pessimism about the media. Others find more substance in the images than I do. They detect there evidence of minority success and achievement, symbolic of their "rising expectations."

I am impressed rather with the reality of unemployment touching as much as 25 percent of black and minority youth of working age, of generations trapped in a hopeless welfare system, of a general retreat from social programs initiated in the 1960s. Vast numbers of parents have expectations that rise no higher than getting or holding a job, receiving a welfare check or food stamps, keeping their kids off drugs, reasonable heat and garbage removal, and police protection without brutality.

The realities are rather dreary for the poor, the old, and the nonwhite in America.

But many of us can avoid touching the centers of this plight. Automobiles transport us around the ghettos, and mass media give us images of easy optimism. Therefore, only a persistent scepticism of manufactured illusions will keep us in touch with our reality.

Popular Culture: Mirror of Women Moving

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BETTY FRIEDAN, a feminist lecturer and author, founded the National Organization for Women and served as its first president from 1966 to 1970. Her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is generally credited with having sparked the modern women's movement. She is also the author of *It Changed My Life* and numerous magazine articles.

THE NEW WOMAN. Maude (Beatrice Arthur), shown here comforting husband Walter (Bill Macy), is representative of the new image of women being projected on television today.

XIII: POPULAR CULTURE: MIRROR OF WOMEN MOVING

Betty Friedan

In a certain sense, the modern women's movement, one of the most far-reaching revolutions of all time, began as a sudden, long-overdue, pent-up, personal, massively reverberating "no" to the image of women embedded in popular culture.

There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image that I came to call the feminine mystique.

A strangely helpless, passive, not very bright, blond little housewife was the only image there was on television, in movies, and in women's magazines. It was projected by commercials, family situation comedies, soap operas, and game shows—from "I Love Lucy" and "Queen for a Day" to "As the World Turns." The reality of the increasing millions of women already working outside the home was denied by that image.

We had to break through that image in our own consciousness and in the popular culture. The only weapons for doing this were the words, passion, will, and actions that create new images. The media that had

reflected the mass embrace and return of women to full-time domesticity after World War II and then distorted and imprisoned women in that image—the feminine mystique—now began to reflect and carry the images of women acting as persons in society.

Protests of the 1960s

It was not possible in the 1960s to read newspapers or watch television as the blacks marched and protested against living in America in anything less than full human dignity and equality, for women not to finally say, "me, too."

Women had to demand to be taken seriously as people, not invisible sex objects or dumb blond housewives. "They don't need to use mace or tear gas or bull whips and police dogs to keep women down in this country," I used to joke bitterly at the beginning of our revolution, "all they need to do is treat us like a joke."

It irritated us that, at first, the media always picked on the cutest, most extreme, or even the sexiest and most shocking of antics in the movement rather than the sober actions we were taking, which spoke to the condition of all women. But we quickly learned how to use those sexy antics to get the media's attention for our substantive issues.

Changing Image

Today, the housewife image can still be seen, especially in the commercials and the game shows and soap operas, whose audience is presumably those housewives and elderly people still at home during the day.

But the prime-time image of women is increasingly a bright, attractive, sexy, gutsy woman. Heroines, single, married, or divorced, are no longer passive sex objects, nor do they silently wave good-bye, but act adventurously in their own lives. Mary Tyler Moore, lively, lovable editor on the fictional news station, gave such a happy human image of a woman as an independent person that several generations of young (and not so young) women alone stopped suffering if they didn't have a date on Saturday night.

Phyllis, Maude, Rhoda, Angie Dickinson in "Police Woman," even the "Bionic Woman" all comprise a more various, actively human image of women than that old dreary drudge. "Charlie's Angels" are still sex objects, but they are also strong, or bright, and at least have their own adventures in life.

Even in soap opera, the sassy heroine of "One Day at a Time" is not only a sympathetic, likeable, self-supporting divorced mother, as attractive as her two daughters, but she had a younger boyfriend who adored her.

ABC has hired the former head of NOW's (National Organization for Women) Task Force on the Image of Women as a consultant to set new standards to change or eliminate commercials which insult women. The dreary, dumb wife may soon be as rare on television as the Stepanfetchit blackface.

And as a result of class action suits and other pressures from the women who work in television—and the women's movement groups who monitor it—more and more women can be seen as news commentators, producers, directors, and even camerapersons, on both local and network TV. Barbara Walters will not be the last female anchorperson, and Marlene Sanders is outlasting some of her male colleagues as network vice-president for news and public affairs at ABC.

Magazine Market

The women's magazines have also had to modify their feminine mystique, aiming now at the 40 percent of American women who today work outside the home as well as in it, and who constitute a market as or more lucrative than those who still call themselves "housewives." The tone of these magazines today also reflects a less simple and insulting image of that housewife—one who can evidently identify with complex, adventurous women as people.

These days, *Ladies' Home Journal* will picture a Mary Tyler Moore on its cover, along with an article by financial columnist Sylvia Porter on "Pensions for Housewives," an interview with Golda Meir, Katharine Hepburn on "Why I Never Wanted Children," and "What Women Can Do About Violent Crime."

The caricatures of "Total Womanhood" and *Viva, Playgirl, Hustler, Penthouse, Oui,* and points further pornographic, represent and play to male and female last ditch reaction against, and fear of, woman as person: wrapping her nude body in saran wrap and ostrich feathers or dehumanizing her into faceless genitalia, magnified in centerfolds almost beyond the size of life. But *Playboy* stock is not doing so well on the market these days. Helen Gurley Brown's *Cosmopolitan* girl has been a more interesting, lively graft of the new image onto the old sexual self.

The New Consciousness

A veritable book industry has been created by women's new consciousness. Writing fictionally and nonfictionally about their problems and desires, the novels—and the few movies like *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*—are still wallowing in the problems caused by the feminine mystique. Reactions, miserable or spirited like Erica Jong's, have not yet been able to transcend the rage and create a new image.

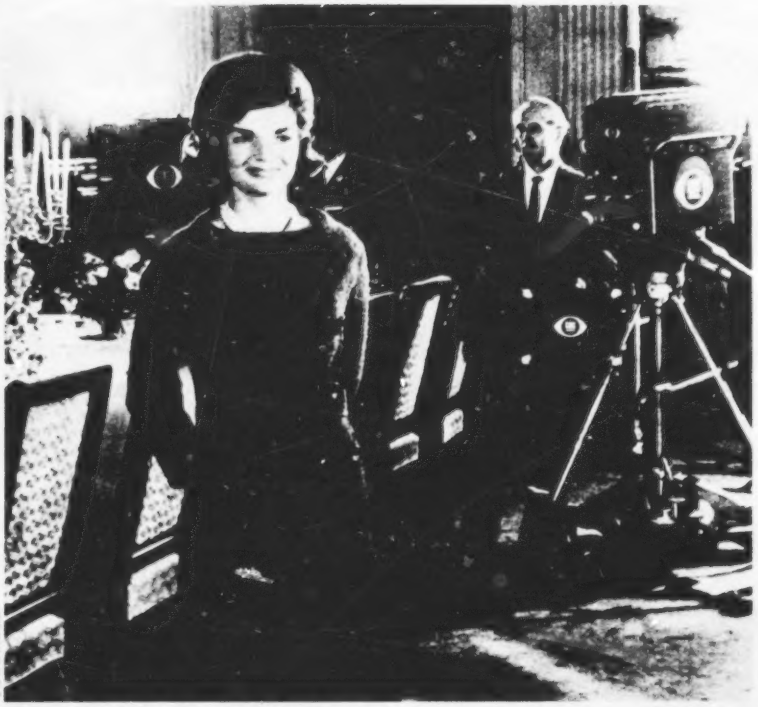
Newspapers today carry a living, changing reality of women, creating new parameters for men and society, beyond any image of, or by, "women's lib." Women reporters cover finance, sports, and politics and are no longer segregated on the women's page. That page, in papers like the *New York Times*, is becoming a whole "lifestyle" or "living" section—as important and newsworthy as acts of violence and considered of equal importance to men.

Today, the image of women in popular culture reflects more accurately the various realities of women moving—and the reactions against that movement—because many more women are involved in creating these images. The actions women have taken—sometimes literal "class actions" in court as with *Newsweek* and NBC—have broken the barriers that kept women from decision-making jobs in the media.

The formal actions of the women's movement, and the daily repercussions in office and home, have finally made women visible as *people*, even to the male image makers who before saw them only as servant-housewives or secretaries, "girls," or passive objects of sexual fantasy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BENNETT M. BERGER is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, San Diego, where he joined the faculty in 1973 after teaching for ten years at the University of California, Davis. The author of *Working Class Suburb* and *Looking for America*, he has been editor of *Contemporary Sociology* since 1975.



UPI Photo

UPI Photo

LIFE-STYLE REVOLUTION. (Left) Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, as First Lady of the United States, conducting a tour of the White House. (Right) Barefoot and in casual attire, she walks on the Isle of Capri in 1970, accompanied by Valentino, king of Italian fashion.

XIV: POPULAR CULTURE AND AMERICAN LIFE-STYLES

Bennett M. Berger

Popular culture embraces far more than the TV shows, movies, magazines, books, newspapers, recordings, sports, and other theatrical events that engage our time and attention.

It also includes the games we play, the pictures on our walls, the clothes on our backs, the furniture in our homes, and the food we consume, from McDonald's hamburgers to organically grown rice.

From the enormous variety of such things that are available, we select some (but not others) to watch, read, listen to, hang, eat, wear, sit on, play with, and otherwise buy or participate in.

Our selections usually have some consistency or coherence to them.

If one knows a person's taste in TV or music or cuisine, one can predict with some probability what his or her taste is likely to be in reading, clothes, or movies. The particular *pattern* of selections constitutes an individual's (or a group's) style of life, for "style" in anything refers to recurrent motifs or patterns which make a variety of objects or events recognizably "like" each other in some sense.

But how or why people go about selecting their life-styles in the ways they do requires an understanding of their *resources*, for their selections (and therefore their life-styles) are strongly affected by such things as their income, education, and age, as well as by other features of their social background.

Sociologist Herbert Gans has pointed out, for example, that shows appealing to the lowest "taste-publics" are gradually disappearing from network TV because the younger generation of even the lowest income groups are far better educated than their parents were, and their tastes are consequently more sophisticated.

As the size and characteristics of audiences change, so does the popular culture.

The "Counterculture"

Some of the most interesting changes in the popular culture over the past decade or so have been introduced

through the so-called counterculture, a taste culture promoted mostly (but not exclusively) by the young. But even so unusual a life-style as this can be understood in terms of the social backgrounds and circumstances of the people who shared it.

They were, in a sense, a leisure class: well educated, with no direct experience of financial insecurity, with disposable incomes provided largely by parents. Unbound by institutional commitments to job, family, community, or career, they were free to "do their thing," which they did with great abandon.

The culture they created was dominated by an antipathy to the impersonality and bureaucratic character of middle-class life which, in their view, had preprogrammed them for bland corporate lives in mass-produced suburbs. In its place they substituted a culture of "liberation," which took a variety of forms.

Sexual freedom asserted liberation from restraints on physical pleasure. The psychedelic drugs were used to transcend the conventional limits of consciousness and achieve breakthroughs to the perception of "other realities." Exotic, ecstatic, and occult religions were used for similar spiritual purposes.

Their music, too, was ecstatic: enormously amplified guitars producing sheets of sound composed and played by the young themselves in rhythms alien to most of the older generation. Its lyrics preached love, sex, drugs, and criticisms of "Establishments" who repressed liberation.

Dress and personal adornment had flamboyance, flash, and glitter, or expressed other modes of disavowing conservative, middle-class clothing.

Residences were often communal, putting sometimes large groups in intimate daily contact with each other in "intentional families," providing a kind of continual mutual psychotherapy in which utter "openness and honesty" were affirmed as liberation from repressed guilt and shame.

Add to these the great moral crusade of the civil rights movement and the movement against the most detested war in the history of the U.S., and a political dimension was added to the cultural rebellion of the young against an "Establishment" identified with war, death, repression, money-grubbing, and the oppression of colonial peoples at home and abroad.

Permanent Revolution

These movements coalesced briefly in the late 1960s, attracted worldwide attention, and then rapidly declined.

Although the distinctive life-style of the "youth culture" of the 1960s was severely weakened, its influence is still visible throughout other American life-styles and taste cultures.

Sexuality is now more open and candid in books, magazines, films, and storefront massage parlors. Marijuana became so widespread that many states have "decriminalized" (if not legalized) it. Flamboyant clothes and jewelry are now a familiar part of middle-class male dress, even as blue jeans and work shirts become chic and expensive.

Life, which appealed to everyone, is gone, but *Rolling Stone* and *New Times*, which appeal to the heirs of the counterculture, are successful magazines.

Encounter groups and similar instant therapies are available every weekend as recreation at countless community centers. Communal experiments in solar heating and waste disposal are now part of a mainstream environmentalist movement.

The "hippies," who loved wilderness and went "back to the land," were a vanguard that has produced the first net increases in rural population in many decades. Natural foodstores are everywhere. Students carry their books not in briefcases or bookbags but in knapsacks made for hitchhiking or camping in the wilderness.

Bob Dylan or the Rolling Stones may never have a prime time TV series, but Sonny and Cher have, as well as other performers who adapt elements of counterculture music to more traditional pop forms to create a mix that successfully appeals to much larger audiences.

Transmitting Culture

Those who adopt a particular life-style frequently attempt to influence other groups to adopt that culture and pass it on. Country and western music, formerly part of a taste culture limited largely to southern and western rural people, has in recent times been transformed into a music with national, even international, appeal.

Obsolete or declining styles in popular culture may be revived through fashions for nostalgia, as happened recently with ragtime music (through the film *The Sting*) or rural family life ("The Waltons") or the teenage culture of the early 1950s ("Happy Days," *American Graffiti*).

Formerly stigmatized life-styles (for example, the urban black ghetto) may achieve subcultural legitimacy through TV shows like "Sanford and Son" or through soul music or Afro styles, which transform something once regarded as unattractive—kinky hair, for example—into something attractive, even beautiful.

Such changes are the more or less temporary outcomes of perpetual conflicts over the "politics of culture." So long as the moral or esthetic standards of some groups are offensive or threatening to the standards of other groups, these struggles will continue. Conflicts over sex or violence on TV are only the most blatant examples of much more widespread (and more subtle) struggles over what should be legitimately available in the popular culture.

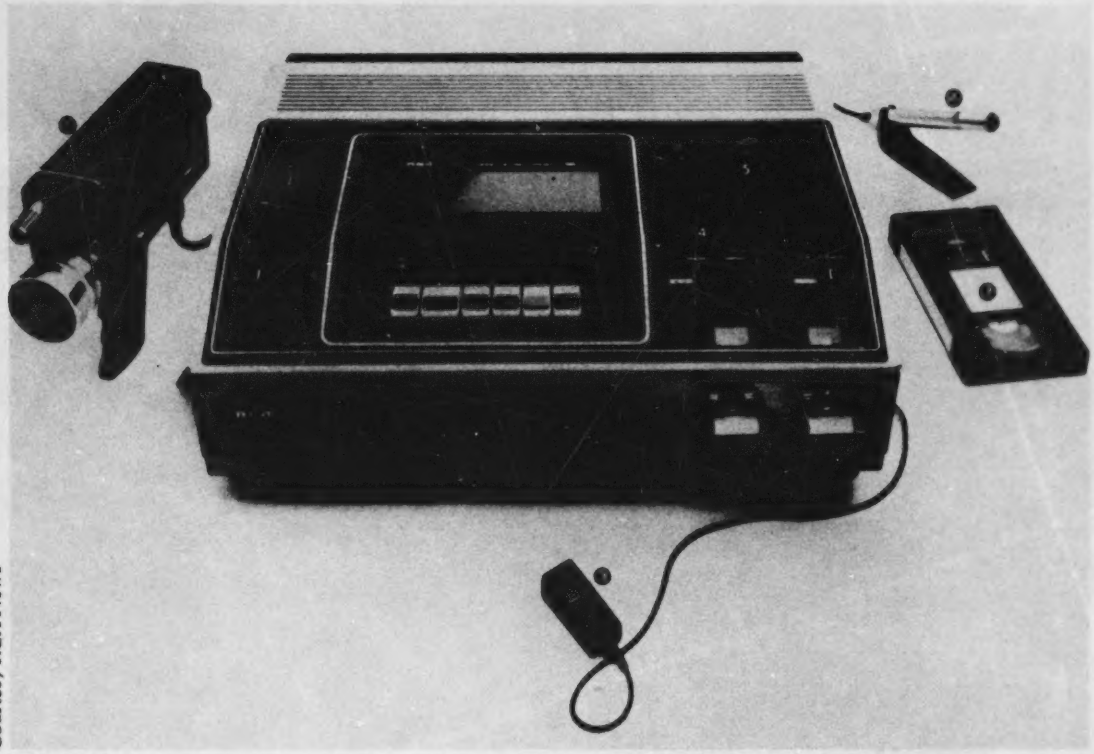
The diversity of popular culture and life-styles, then, represents the diversity of American social groups. At the same time, it is as true of popular culture as it is of other "goods," that the interests of some groups are better represented than other groups, and the less well represented groups continually make claims that will be resisted by the more established groups.

Out of these struggles over cultural pluralism, one can hope that some balance can be achieved between the common culture that defines us as Americans, and the plurality of life-styles that defines us as the particular kinds of Americans we are.

The Death of the Mass Media?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALVIN TOFFLER, an author, lecturer, and consultant to foundations and industry, is perhaps best known for his prize-winning book, *Future Shock.* A former associate editor of *Fortune Magazine,* he is also the author of *The Culture Consumers* and *The Eco-Spasm Report* and editor of *The Futurists, The Schoolhouse in the City,* and *Learning for Tomorrow.*



Courtesy RCA News

CREATORS OF OUR OWN CULTURE? Technological developments, such as this RCA video cassette recorder, may provide greater individuality in our culture. Features include: (1) optional camera that allows production of home shows, (2) speed switch that allows up to four hours recording time, (3) remote pause control, (4) tape counter with memory, (5) electronic digital clock/timer for unattended recording, (6) optional microphone, (7) cassettes with four-hour recording capacity.

XV: THE DEATH OF THE MASS MEDIA?

Alvin Toffler

Are we witnessing the death of the mass media?

Starting nearly 200 years ago, the media—newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the movies—have increasingly influenced daily life in all the industrial nations. Filling our ears with mass-produced music, our eyes with mass-produced graphics, and our minds with mass-produced folk tales about football heroes and Hollywood stars, they form the sea of popular culture in which all of us swim.

Their basic principle was simple: Like a factory that stamped out products, they stamped out images, then disseminated them. Sets of images, carefully engineered by professional writers, editors, artists, newscasters, actors or copywriters, were packaged into programs, articles, or films, and then pumped wholesale into the mind-stream of the nation, or for that matter, the world.

The result was a standardization of the culture of the world's industrial societies, the homogenization of ideas, values and life styles. The mass media helped create what sociologists came to call "mass society."

The *Ladies Home Journal*, for example, was the world's first truly mass magazine, achieving a circulation of around 1,000,000 at the turn of the century. When the *LHJ* carried an article on how to decorate your living room, it influenced taste (and furniture sales) from California to New England, helping in this way to create a national market for standardized, mass manufactured goods.

Even today, the mass media retain enormous mind-shaping power.

Signs of the Future

Nevertheless, there are signs that the mass media are in their death throes and that a revolutionary new information system is being born. What we are witnessing is nothing less than the de-massification of the mass media.

Since the 1950s some of the world's largest magazines—*Life*, *Look* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, to name a few—have died or shrunk into ghostly reincarnations of their former selves. Some media gurus declared that this was because people were no longer reading, that television produced a "post-literate" generation.

Yet after a decade or more of so-called post-literacy, people are reading as much as, if not more than, ever before. Ask the publishers. People are reading. But their word-diet is no longer limited to standardized messages aimed at a universal, mass audience. The place of the great mega-magazines has increasingly been taken by hundreds of mini-magazines carrying highly specialized messages to small segments of the public.

On one newsstand in Omaha, not long ago, I found 15 different magazines aimed at aviation enthusiasts alone. In addition, the stands are filled with cheaply produced, off-set printed, specialized magazines for hot-rodders, scuba-divers, ecologists, collectors of antique cameras, UFO freaks, religious cultists, political splinter groups, ethnic subcultures, businesses, professions, and for every age group from toddlers to those in their "golden years."

Regionalism Revived

Long before we had national magazines at all, we had regional and local magazines that reflected the regional and local basis of our technology and economy. As technology grew more powerful, and national markets emerged, these local and regional publications disappeared and the national magazine took their place.

Today, we see a revival of regional and local publications in every part of the country. There are even magazines that slice up the reading public two ways at once: by region *and* by interest. Thus we find, for example, *South*, a magazine aimed exclusively at southern businessmen.

What does all this mean? The death of the mass-interest magazines heralds a basic change in our popular culture. The decline of the mass magazines and the proliferation of specialized magazines means that fewer standardized, culture-wide messages are flowing into our minds, and that more specialized messages are reaching different sub-groups within the society. This is accelerating the break-up of the old mass society and the formation of a new social, political, and cultural diversity.

With the arrival of cheap copying machines, as media critic Marshall McLuhan has suggested, every individual can be his or her own "publisher," and we are now freely circulating images, messages, signs, and symbols to very small groups, indeed. The Xeroxed Christmas message that goes to family and friends is an example of this form of "personalized" publishing. It represents the ultimate de-massification of the mass media.

Sound Factories

But parallel trends are racing through the audio media as well. Take, for example, the tape recorder. The radio broadcaster operates a "sound factory" distributing the same sounds to millions of ears simultaneously. The tape recorder makes each of us a broadcaster, or more accurately, a narrow-caster. We choose what we wish to record, of all the sounds around us, and we can duplicate them and pass them around to friends or through chain-letters, if we like.

Radio, putting us in the position of passive listener, and carrying messages from the few to the many, is inherently undemocratic. Tape recorders are inherently democratic. (Soviet dissidents—poets and singers who cannot get on the state-controlled airwaves—pass messages along the tape-vine.)

Television remains today the great standardizing medium, and Barbara Walters can still command $1,000,000 a year because it is thought she can maximize the mass audience for her network. But television is still a primitive technology. (We mistakenly think TV is more "advanced" than printing, but it has gone through fewer successive generations of improvement.)

As we move toward wider use of cable and video cassette, the number of channels and the number of different messages will rise, just as it is already doing in both print and oral communications. Here, too, we shall increasingly generate images, ideas, and symbols to be shared by a few, rather than by the culture as a whole.

De-massification

These changes in our media and in our popular culture reflect even deeper shifts in our society. Industrialism produced a mass society. We are now swiftly moving beyond industrialism to a new stage of civilization that will be technological, but not industrial. This new society will be the mass society de-massified.

We see this de-massification taking place at many levels. We see it in the rise of ethnic consciousness, in the rise of secessionism in Quebec, Scotland, or Britany, in the breakup of monolithic Communism into nationally-oriented Marxist movements, in the growing sectionalism in the United States, and in many other social, political, and artistic manifestations.

This centrifugal process will undoubtedly bring with it many problems. But it will also open vast new opportunities for us to reach toward greater individuality.

Popular culture, instead of being mass-machined at a few centers, then mass-distributed to passive culture consumers, will take on a new richness and variety, as we become producers as well as consumers of our own imagery and symbolism, our own values and lifestyles.

Surely some powerful national mass media will survive this long-term shift. No doubt there will continue to be some national or even global hook-ups to spread certain important ideas, news, and metaphors simultaneously to us all.

But instead of getting more of our popular culture from the mass media in pre-packaged form, as it were, we will increasingly design and create our own culture, as communities did in the distant, pre-industrial past. We are moving swiftly into the future.

We are about to witness the death of the mass media as we have known them.